saalt
SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS LEADING TOGETHER

A DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT OF SOUTH ASIANS IN THE UNITED STATES

December 2015

Between 2000 and 2010, the South Asian American population became the fastest growing major ethnic group in the United States and has emerged in new areas of the country. This factsheet, based primarily on Census 2010 and the 2013 American Community Survey, provides a national snapshot of the community. We encourage community leaders, government entities, policymakers, and the media to use this data to better understand South Asian Americans and help inform their engagement with this community.

While the data in this factsheet provides a baseline understanding of the community, various South Asian populations are often undercounted or overcounted in the Census. This is due to many factors, including non-Indian individuals often needing to write-in their ethnicity on Census forms and fear among certain populations to participate in government surveys. As with all demographic resources, this factsheet should be coupled with disaggregated data across the diversity of South Asian populations to provide a comprehensive understanding of the community. SAALT is working closely with the Census Bureau to expand South Asian categories for ethnicity, national origin, and regional groups in preparation for Census 2020.

Who are South Asians?

The South Asian community in the United States includes individuals who trace their ancestry to Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The community also includes members of the South Asian diaspora – past generations of South Asians who originally settled in other parts of the world, including the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, Canada and the Middle East, and other parts of Asia and the Pacific Islands.

Population Numbers at a Glance

Below are some key facts about the national population in the United States from Census 2010 data and the 2013 American Community Survey:

- According to the 2013 American Community Survey nearly 4.3 million South Asians live in the United States tracing their roots to Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and the diaspora, including but not limited to Trinidad/Tobago, Guyana, Fiji, Tanzania, and Kenya.[i] This is up from 3.5 million counted in Census 2010.
- Indians comprise the largest segment of the South Asian community, making up over 80% of the total population, followed by Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Nepali, Sri Lankans, and Bhutanese.
- Unfortunately data is not readily available for diasporic South Asian communities specifically the Indo-Caribbean, and Indo-African communities.

Table 1: Changes in South Asian American Population, 2000 to 2010[ii]

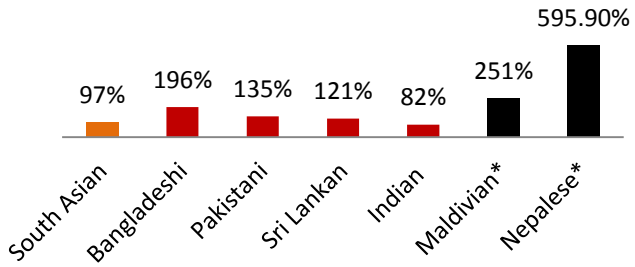
	Single Ethnicity Reported			Multiple Ethnicities Reported		
	2000	**2010**	**Percent Change**	**2000**	**2010**	**Percent Change**
Bangladeshi	46,905	142,080	202.9%	57,412	147,300	156.6%
Bhutanese	192	18,814	9,699.0%	212	19,439	9,069.3%
Indian	1,718,778	2,918,807	69.8%	1,899,599	3,183,063	67.6%
Maldivian	29	102	251.7%	51	127	149%
Nepali	8,209	57,209	596.9%	9,399	59,490	532.9%
Pakistani	164,628	382,994	132.6%	204,309	409,163	100.3%
Sri Lankan	21,364	41,456	94.0%	24,587	45,381	84.6%
Total for Selected Ethnicities	1,960,105	3,561,462				

Population Growth

Within the South Asian community, various populations experienced unprecedented growth between 2000 and 2013.

- Comparing the 2000 Census and 2013 American Community Survey Data, the South Asian community as a whole, grew 97%.
    - The Bangladeshi community experienced the most significant growth, increasing by 196% followed by Pakistani, Sri Lankan, and Indian. (See Table 2)

Table 2: Population Growth (2000 - 2013)



[iii]

* Maldivian and Nepali data based on comparison between Census 2000 and 2010. All other data based on comparison between Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2013. Population growth of the Bhutanese community is not shown given the 9,069% increase. (See Table 1)

Population Trends and Comparisons to other Ethnic Groups

By 2065 it is projected that Asian Americans will be the largest immigrant population.[iv] The term immigrant refers to individuals living in the United States but were not U.S. citizens at birth and necessarily all individuals that trace their ancestry to a country outside of the United States.

South Asians are the fastest growing population, among all major ethnic groups, in the country.

- The growth rate for the South Asian population between 2010 to 2013 greatly exceeds that of the Asian American population as a whole (10%), as well as that of the Hispanic American population (4%), and non-Hispanic whites (2%). [v]

South Asians make up one of the largest Asian American ethnic groups in the country.[vi]

- Indians and Pakistanis are the third and seventh largest Asian American ethnic groups, respectively.
- Bangladeshis, Nepali, Sri Lankans, and Bhutanese each rank among the top twenty Asian American ethnic groups.

Localities with high concentration of South Asians[vii]

States that have historically had significant South Asian populations continue to do so now.

- The five states with the largest South Asian populations are **California, New York, New Jersey, Texas, and Illinois**.
- Metropolitan areas with the largest South Asian populations are **New York City, Chicago, Washington, DC, Los Angeles, and San Francisco-Oakland**.
- Over the past ten years, the Washington, DC metropolitan area overtook the Los Angeles metropolitan area with the third largest South Asian population.

Various South Asian Groups are also concentrated in different metropolitan areas in the country.

- Significant numbers of Bhutanese community members have settled in the South, particularly in Dallas, Atlanta, and Houston.
- The Detroit and Philadelphia metropolitan areas appear in the top five locations for the Bangladeshi community.

Table 3: Top 5 U.S. Metropolitan Area for Selected South Asian Groups[viii]*

Bangladeshi	Bhutanese	Indian	Nepali	Pakistani	Sri Lankan
New York City, NY	Atlanta, GA	New York City, NY	New York City, NY	New York City, NY	New York City, NY
Washington, DC	Dallas, TX	Chicago, IL	Washington, DC	Houston, TX	Los Angeles, CA
Detroit, MI	Houston, TX	Washington, DC	Dallas, TX	Chicago, IL	Washington, DC
Los Angeles, CA	Seattle, WA	Los Angeles, CA	Boston, MA	Washington, DC	San Francisco, CA
Philadelphia, PA	Phoenix, AZ	San Francisco, CA	San Francisco, CA	Dallas, TX	Dallas, TX

*No data available for Maldivian populations. Data are available only for the population groups having a population of 100 or more of that specific group within a particular geographic area.

Implications of South Asian Demographics on Electoral Participation

With the 2016 elections underway, South Asians are becoming an increasingly powerful segment of the American electorate. The population of non-U.S. citizens of voting age has also increased since 2000. While not currently eligible to vote, this population includes green card holders who may become U.S. citizens in the future and will add to the growing electorate.

Estimated Population of South Asian Americans of Voting Age in 2010 for Selected South Asian Groups[ix]*

	US Citizen (both Naturalized and born in the U.S.)	Non-U.S. Citizen
Bangladeshi	38,843	32,666
Indian	1,203,178	989,990
Pakistani	138,351	99,870
Sri Lankan	14,815	15,564
Nepali	5208	26,018
Bhutanese	338	4,840

*This data does not reflect individuals that did not disclose their citizenship status.

Implications of South Asian Demographics on Immigration

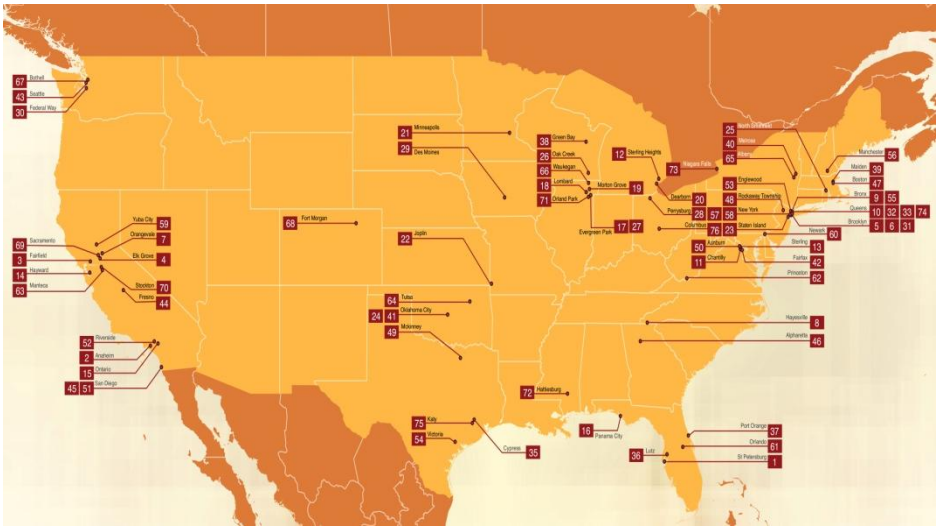
Unfortunately, there is little to no data on immigration for South Asian countries of origin other than India. SAALT is working with demographers and community organizations to change that.

- There are currently **450,000 undocumented Indians** alone in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2014)[x]
- **41% of the 450,000 undocumented India immigrants** will be eligible for DAPA and DACA[xi]
    - 185,000 Indians are eligible for DAPA and 20,000 for DACA
- **Only 28% of eligible Indian Americans** have applied to DACA, compared to 62% for Mexican Americans[xii]
- The **largest populations of undocumented Indian immigrants** live in Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wisconsin.[xiii]

Implications of South Asian Demographics on Hate Violence

An overwhelming majority of the xenophobic political statements documented in SAALT's 2014 report "Under Suspicion, Under Attack" —72 out of 78, or 92%— were motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment. This unacceptably high rate of anti-Muslim rhetoric impacts all of our communities—South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab. The report also shows that **84% of the hate violence incidents documented were motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment**.[xiv]

Between January 2011 and April 2014 SAALT documented **83 incidents of hate violence** directed at South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern and Arab communities. These incidents include attacks upon individuals, community spaces, and religious institutions. Incidents are numbered chronologically.[xv] (See map below)



How can stakeholders use this data?

Community leaders, government entities, policymakers, and the media can use this data to better understand South Asian Americans and help inform their engagement with this rapidly growing community.

- **Community-based organizations** can use this data as background for funding requests, media interviews, and advocacy with government entities.
- **Government agencies** at the federal, state, and local levels can use this data for improved data collection and community engagement on various issues such as racial profiling, immigration, and hate violence.
- **Legislators** at the federal, state, and local levels can use this data to better understand where South Asian constituents reside to deepen relationships with the community and reflect their needs in policymaking.
- **Media outlets** can use this data as background for elevating stories covering the South Asian community on various issues, including elections, immigration, and civil rights.

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[i] Source: AAPI Data and Center for American Progress
[ii] Source: 2010 Census Brief: The Asian Population 2010
[iii] Source: AAPI Data and Center for American Progress
[iv] Source: Pew Research Center
[v] Source: AAPI Data and Center for American Progress
[vi] Source: Pew Research Center
[vii] Source: 2010 Census Total Population Data; Summary File 2
[viii] Source: 2010 Census Total Population Data; Summary File 2
[ix] Source: 2006 – 2010 American Community Survey Selected Population Tables
[x] Source: Pew Research Center
[xi] Source: AAPI Data and Center for American Progress
[xii] Source: AAPI Data and Center for American Progress
[xiii] Source: Pew Research Center
[xiv] Source: SAALT Report: Under Suspicion, Under Attack
[xv] Source: SAALT Report: Under Suspicion, Under Attack